

Tribal Group
1-4 Portland
Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T
Direct F
Stephen.mcshane@ofsted.gov.uk

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Ms S Van Horn
Penwith Pupil Referral Unit
Old Lesudjack Infant School
Penbrea Road
Treneere
Penzance
Cornwall
TR18 2GT

Dear Ms Van Horn

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when we inspected your school on 8 December 2009 and for the information you provided before and during our visit. Please could you also pass on our thanks to the students and to the local authority's head of service for meeting with us.

Since the last inspection the centre has moved to new, much larger, premises. There has been an increase in staff numbers and some changes in staff roles and responsibilities.

As a result of the inspection on 5 November 2008, the pupil referral unit was asked to do the following:

- Complete plans to move the PRU to its new site and ensure that there is detailed planning to extend the amount of teaching time for students and provide a broader, more balanced curriculum.
- Make better use of the data on students' achievements to ensure that targets for success within development planning are more challenging and measurable.
- Ensure that individual targets show students clearly how they can improve their work and that these targets are used by all staff to enhance students' learning.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time, the school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.



From a range of starting points, students are making satisfactory progress in core subjects and, where appropriate, are working towards accredited courses. Students are making satisfactory progress in achieving their personal targets, with many demonstrating improved behaviour and attitudes to their learning. During our visit students applied themselves well in a range of subjects and showed positive relationships with staff and with each other. Year 11 students who left the centre in 2009 were all successful in securing employment or going on to further education.

During the last few months a huge team effort, led by the headteacher and the deputy headteacher, has meant that the move to the new premises has been successful. The unit is orderly and good routines have been established. Students appear settled and are being encouraged to take responsibility and develop independence. The unit's clear vision and purpose to enable successful re-engagement in learning and reintegration into mainstream education have informed the transition, the curriculum and the use of the building. Many expectations and routines are now the same as in a school or college. In addition, the unit has successfully maintained its ethos as a nurturing, friendly and safe environment which promotes mutual respect, tolerance and kindness. A strong staff team is committed to doing the best for the students.

The new building, particularly with its specialist areas for art, information and communication technology (ICT), music, food technology and science, has provided new opportunities to broaden the curriculum. The centre, with its partners, now offers students more teaching time and a wider range of accreditation opportunities. The curriculum structure now gives prominence to the development of key skills, with subject sessions and planned themed fortnights as well as sport and leisure activities. There are plans in place to develop vocational opportunities further. It is early days and as yet the unit does not have evidence about the impact of the recent changes, although students say that they are enjoying the new activities and like the basic skills sessions. The primary department is making effective use of their new space to offer an appropriate and more exciting primary curriculum. There are appropriate areas where pupils can work independently or in small groups with room to address any of their individual, particular needs. Additional space provides good opportunities for visitors or projects to be accommodated and the curriculum to be further enhanced.

Staff know students well. There is now a system to set regular targets in a range of academic areas, linked to the National Curriculum or accredited courses, as well as social and personal development. Daily monitoring and an effective mentoring system mean that targets are regularly reviewed and allow students to take responsibility and to reflect on their achievements. There is some good practice, particularly in the primary department, where the small steps needed to achieve their targets are very clear to the pupils. Some targets in Key Stages 3 and 4 are too broad and are not meaningful. This means that progress is difficult to measure and



the level of challenge varies and the students themselves are unclear about expectations.

During the past year procedures for the collection of assessment data on the students have also improved. These include the monitoring of targets, analysis of attendance, and assessments in health and social and emotional development as well as attainment and progress in the core subjects. This has been an important development. The data collected, however, have not yet been sufficiently analysed, and are not yet informing improvement planning effectively. Managers are very aware of the difficulties comparing the outcomes of their students with national comparators. However, their failure to articulate and define challenging expectations of progress, in academic and social developments, is hampering the better evaluation of the unit. It is also preventing the subsequent planning of targeted improvement activities which will lead to improved outcomes for the young people. Plans are in place to evaluate data in the very near future and staff from Penwith have been working with other pupil referral units in Cornwall to develop its processes and establish appropriate benchmarks.

The local authority and the unit's leaders have appropriately prioritised much of its development activity on the recent move of premises and, as previously described, this has gone well. The centre has maintained the progress and behaviour of students and developed a site that is working effectively. The leaders are very aware of the need now to evaluate the new developments and ensure that they are leading to students making at least good progress. They have appropriate plans to work with their school improvement partner to develop their self-evaluation and with their management committee to ensure that different aspects of the provision are more effectively monitored, evaluated and further improved.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stephen McShane
Her Majesty's Inspector

